

# PROTECT ★ PERSEVERE

2020 Annual Report | Erie VA Medical Center



**VA**



**U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**

Veterans Health Administration  
Erie VA Medical Center

**2****COVID-19 RESPONSE****3****CONNECTING THROUGH  
VIRTUAL CARE****5****BEHAVIORAL HEALTH****7****WHOLE HEALTH****9****FACILITY STATS**

PATIENT SATISFACTION, HIGH  
RELIABILITY ORGANIZATION (HRO),  
EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION

**11****CONSTRUCTION &  
COMMUNITY BASED OUTREACH  
CLINICS (CBOC) HIGHLIGHTS****13****IMPORTANT CONTACTS**

PATIENT RESOURCE GUIDE & VA  
WELCOME KIT

### MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

---

As I reflect on all we have been through in 2020, I'm reminded of the extraordinary character of our employees, Veterans, and community— a character of strength, determination, resilience, and compassion. The challenges of 2020 gave us opportunities to grow, to work together, and to learn from each other in a spirit of perseverance, unity, and teamwork. That is the theme you will see throughout this 2020 Annual Report – a resounding commitment to improving the lives of Veterans. Thank you for your continued partnership, support, and perseverance over this past year and as we continue to move forward throughout this pandemic.



John Gennaro  
Director, Erie VAMC





## ERIE VAMC'S COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Safe care is our mission.** At the start of the pandemic, Erie VAMC immediately activated our Incident Command Team – a highly organized, all-hands-on-deck approach to emergency management – to proactively plan and implement safety measures in a rapidly changing environment to ensure the safety of our employees, patients, and community. Our team remained extremely diligent in adhering to VA policies of universal masking, COVID-19 screening, and infection control protocols throughout the pandemic.

### Erie VAMC Deploys Employees in Support of Disaster Emergency Medical Personnel System (DEMPS)

In FY20, Erie VAMC deployed 10 staff in support of VHA's Disaster Emergency Medical Personnel System (DEMPS) program in response to the pandemic. These employees – including respiratory therapists, RNs, CRNPs, Incident Commander, LPNs, and telehealth technicians – went above and beyond assisting medical facilities throughout the nation that were significantly impacted by COVID-19.

### Community Living Center (CLC) Residents Stay Safe During Pandemic

There were ZERO hospital-acquired COVID-19 cases among our CLC residents thanks to the rigorous safety protocols and proactive testing of staff and patients throughout the pandemic. This is a tremendous achievement in successfully preventing the spread of COVID-19 among our CLC residents.

### Erie VAMC Developed Best Practice for Safe Veteran Transportation ★

Erie VAMC's Voluntary Service Office & Homeless Care Team collaborated to safely continue providing transportation for Veterans to and from VA health care appointments. After measuring more than 30 vehicles – including parking lot shuttle cars, DAV vans, and government vehicles – the team worked to purchase and install polycarbonate dividers in these vehicles. As a result, the Erie VAMC Homeless Care Team and Voluntary Transportation Network could continue to safely transport Veterans throughout the pandemic. This became a best practice nationally.

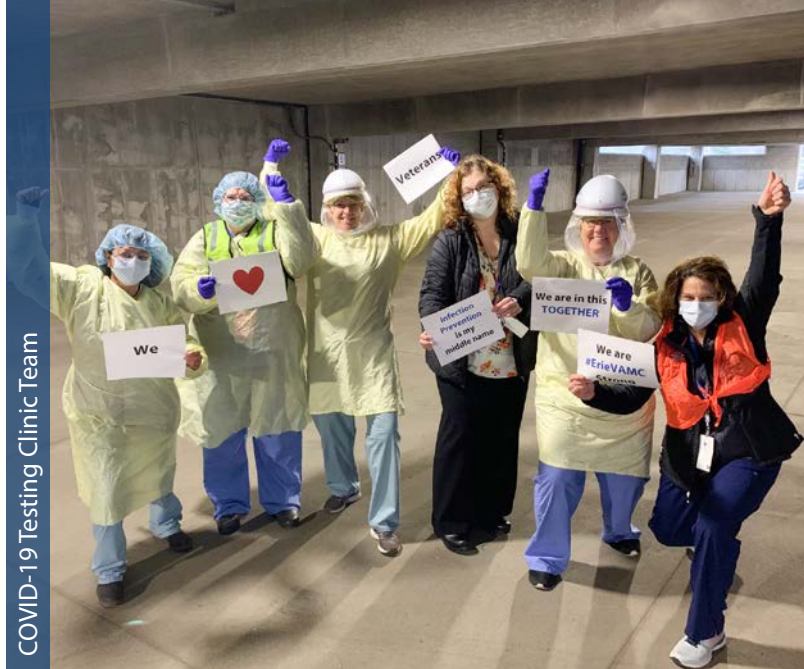
### Vaccine Distribution

Once vaccine became available, Erie VAMC's team worked diligently to rollout the vaccine quickly, safely, and equitably to at-risk populations including staff and high-risk Veterans based on CDC guidance.

*"The past year has been like no other and healthcare was forced to turn on a dime. Our team led the way in proactively planning and implementing changes that ensured the safety of our staff and our Veterans. I look forward to continuing our efforts as we use these innovative strategies and lessons to frame the future."*

— Dorene Sommers

Erie VAMC Incident Commander and  
Associate Director of Patient Care Services





## CONNECTING THROUGH VIRTUAL CARE

Erie led the way in providing convenient, innovative ways to enhance telehealth care for Veterans throughout the pandemic.

### Created Best Practice to Enhance Virtual Care Visits ★

Erie developed a Wellness Kit for newly enrolled Veterans that included a blood pressure kit, a pulse oximeter and additional health-related tools to make the most of virtual visits by allowing providers the ability to track important health vitals. This became a best practice and is currently being rolled out to all established patients.

### Launched New ATLAS (Accessing Telehealth through Local Area Stations) Site to Bring Care Closer to Home

Erie became one of the first sites in the country to bring telehealth care to rural Veterans through the ATLAS project by partnering with the Linesville VFW Post 7842 to offer virtual VA health care right on-site. Veterans in the rural area of Linesville are now able to meet with VA providers via a secure video connection in a private space at the VFW – saving travel time and transportation costs.

### Western Market Initiatives – Expanding Access to Care

Veterans in Erie now have convenient access to cardiology, cataract surgeries, oncology, and orthopedic care closer to home as a result of a strategic partnership between Erie and Pittsburgh VA specialty care providers. The expansion of these specialty services allows Veterans to keep their care within the VA system locally while ensuring continuity of care and an exceptional patient experience.



# VA Health

## VIRTUAL CARE DATA

**5,074**

Unique Veterans served using Telehealth

**4,076**

Tele-mental health care encounters

**543**

Unique patients served via e-consult

**19,813**

Encounters completed via Telehealth

**3,505**

Unique veterans using secure messaging

**9,312**

My HealtheVet (MHV) Veterans with an account

**11,553**

VA Video Connect (VVC) encounters  
(Home Telehealth, Store and Forward and Clinical Video Telehealth)

**24,136**

Total of answered messages

**57,794**

Prescription refills through MHV



## VA Mobile

Connect today!

To find VA Virtual Care tools to fit your needs, visit:  
[mobile.va.gov/appstore](https://mobile.va.gov/appstore)



## BEHAVIORAL HEALTH & MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Erie VAMC's Behavioral Health Clinic (BHC) continues to be rated as one of the best in the nation in terms of patient care and experience. The BHC team embraced virtual care services as a safe way to stay connected with Veterans throughout the pandemic and continues to lead the way as the top user of VA's Video Connect (VVC) technology in the VISN. At the end of FY20, approximately **1 out of every 3 mental health encounters were done virtually**.

### BEST PRACTICE: CONDUCTING MENTAL HEALTH GROUPS VIA VA VIDEO CONNECT DURING THE PANDEMIC ★

Erie's BHC team developed a best practice during the pandemic to help keep Veterans connected to support groups and engaged in evidence-based care. In response to the pandemic, the team initially setup group phone call options to keep support groups connected; however the engagement was low. Based on Veteran feedback, the BH team transitioned to using VA Video Connect technology to improve engagement by keeping the face-to-face support available in a safe, virtual setting. To ensure every Veteran had access to this new option,

the BH team placed VVC consults for personal iPads for Veterans who did not have access to a smart device or reliable internet connectivity. The transition to VVC helped keep Veterans connected to evidence-based care and provided the much needed peer-to-peer support throughout the pandemic. This best practice continues to be used by the majority of BH support groups and was shared as a best practice throughout the VISN.



Call 1-800-273-8255  
and press 1



Chat Online at  
[veteranscrisisline.net](https://veteranscrisisline.net)



Text 838255



**Veterans  
Crisis Line**  
1-800-273-8255 **PRESS 1**

If you are or know of a Veteran in crisis, contact the Veterans Crisis Line for confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You are not alone.

# #BeThere





## Behavioral Health Services at a Glance:

Primary Care/Mental  
Health Integration

Psychosocial Residential  
Rehabilitation Treatment  
Program (PR RTP)

Substance Abuse Treatment

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder  
(PTSD) Treatment

Homeless Care Support

Peer Support

Psychosocial Rehabilitation  
and Recovery Center

RANGE: Case Management  
(for rural counties)

Veterans Employment  
Services/Job Club

Veterans Justice Outreach

Crisis Intervention &  
Suicide Prevention

Military Sexual Trauma Support

**5,502**

Patients Served

**51,269**

Visits

**8,236**

WVC Encounters

**1,368**

WVC Uniques

**33**

PR RTP Admissions



# Live Whole Health.





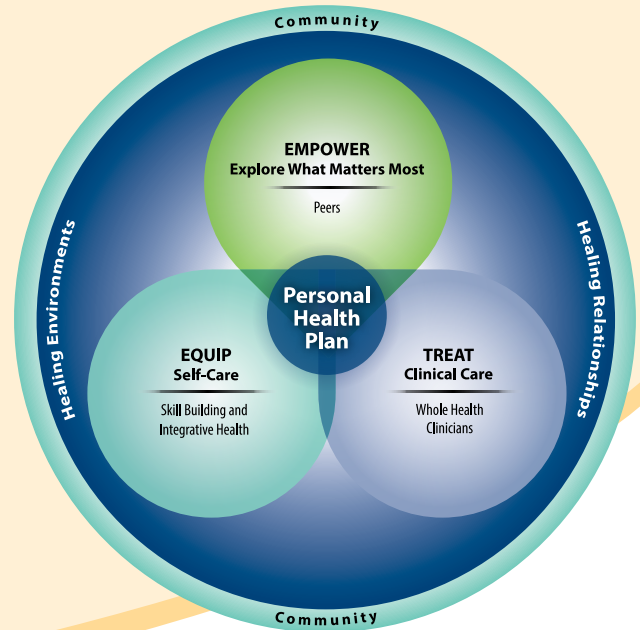
## WHOLE HEALTH - EMPOWERING WELLNESS

Optimizing the health and well-being of Veterans and employees remained a top priority during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our Whole Health Program continued providing wellness management services and instilling hope during uncertain times by using telehealth and phone services to connect with Veterans and employees.

Empowering Veterans and staff to focus on their MAP – Mission, Aspirations, Purpose – activated goal setting, advocacy and accountability – all critical components of a coordinated path to increased quality of life. Certified practitioners and health coaches are available across Erie VAMC and each of our five community-based outpatient clinics to provide Whole Health services

### WH SERVICES INCLUDE:

- Biofeedback
- Health coaching
- Yoga
- Battlefield Auricular Acupuncture (BFA)
- Acupuncture
- Cupping for Massage Therapy
- Tai Chi
- Guided Imagery
- Mindfulness Meditation
- Clinical Hypnosis
- Reiki
- Qi Gong



### EMPLOYEE WHOLE HEALTH

In FY20, self-care became more important than ever as our staff continued to serve on the frontlines of the pandemic.

The Whole Health team offered a variety of wellness programs to all employees including daily mindfulness sessions, Reiki, acupressure, nutrition classes, wellness café opportunities, tapping and cupping sessions, and more to invest in the health and wellness of all Erie VAMC employees.

### WHY DOES WH MATTER?

"If you don't take time for wellness, you'll be forced to take time out because of illness." – Whole Health Veteran

**2,184**

Total unique Veterans Served

**8,007**

Total Veteran Encounters

**1,617**

Total BFA Encounters

**551**

Total BFA Uniques

PROVIDING A PREMIER EXPERIENCE

Erie Leads the Way as Flagship High Reliability Organization

As a High Reliability Organization, Erie VAMC continued to invest in engaging our workforce, promoting a culture of safety, promoting a culture of continuous improvement, and supporting a culture where all employees are empowered to serve as patient advocates. This is our foundation of care aimed at building trust and providing an exceptional patient experience.

VETERAN  
Satisfaction

- 89%  
Overall Patient Satisfaction
- 81%  
Overall Patient Rating of Provider
- 91%  
Trust Score  
(26% increase from FY17)

82%  
Willingness to Recommend Erie VA  
(VA National Average 70%)

80%  
Overall Rating of Hospital  
(Community Benchmark 72%)



21,215  
Unique Patients

19,480 1,735  
Male Female

2,315  
Post 9/11 Veterans Served

247,545  
Outpatient Visits

1,405  
Surgical Procedures

281  
Total Admissions  
(including observation)

115  
Medicine

68  
Medicine Obs

33 65  
PR RTP CLC

\$5.8M  
NRM obligations

\$57.3M  
Non-VA Community Care



\$192.3M  
TOTAL Operating Budget

\$135.4M  
Medical Center Budget



838

Total Employees

231

Veteran  
Employees

145

Nurses (RNs)

43

Physicians

383

Volunteers

43,552

Volunteer Hours

## EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION

**Amid a global pandemic, Erie VAMC employee satisfaction scores continued to rise across all survey categories** – echoing the correlation between exceptional care for Veterans and the engagement of valued employees.

**Forbes business magazine announced VA was chosen as one of America's Best Large Employers of 2021** – a designation that resonates with Veteran's positive experience and annual All Employee Survey data.

**Best Place to Work 77%**

↑ 26% from FY17

**Overall Satisfaction 4.04 out of 5**

↑ 10% from FY17

**Recommend My Organization**

**4.18 out of 5**

↑ 12% from FY17

**Overall Perception of Patient**

**Safety 4.44 out of 5**

↑ 13% from FY16

## VOLUNTEER COMMITMENT

Throughout the pandemic, our volunteer drivers continued to ensure Veterans had reliable transportation to and from their VA health care appointments. Their steadfast commitment to serving Veterans was recognized nationally as Erie VAMC volunteer drivers were ranked #1 in the nation for the number of DAV volunteer drivers and volunteer hours. Erie VAMC also led the VISN in the total number of volunteer hours in FY20.





## INVESTING IN THE FUTURE - CONSTRUCTION UPDATES

### New McKean County VA Clinic

**Status:** Completed February 2021

**Details:** On February 1, 2021, VA renewed its commitment to providing exceptional healthcare to Veterans by relocating the McKean County VA Clinic to 14 Foster Brook Boulevard in Bradford, PA.

The 7,200 square foot state-of-the-art facility offers convenient access to care, ample parking, and a modernized design centered around providing an exceptional patient experience for more than 1,100 area Veterans. The McKean VA Clinic is staffed and operated by Valor Healthcare in close collaboration with the Erie VAMC.

The clinic design includes five exam rooms, a designated women's health area, three telehealth rooms, a procedure/specialty clinic room, an education and conference room, a lab area, and administrative offices to provide a wide range of primary and specialty care services for Veterans.

### Dental Clinic

**Status:** Completed June 2020

**Details:** This project included remodeling approximately 7,000 square footage converting the old surgical wing into modern dental clinic that includes four general treatment rooms, one oral specific room, and one x-ray room.

### Community Living Center Project Canopy & Walkway

**Status:** Currently Underway

**Details:** This project will provide a covered canopy and walkway to provide some protection from harsh winter weather elements and provide additional space to improve traffic flow of visitors and delivery services.

### Chiller Plant

**Status:** Future Planning

**Details:** This project will improve efficiency and environmental stewardship by creating a centralized chiller plant to replace multiple rooftop air conditioning units.

### Primary Care Expansion Project

**Status:** Future Planning

**Details:** This project will increase primary care and support areas by approximately 10,000 square feet allowing for an efficient patient aligned care team design to improve the patient experience.

## OUR COMMUNITY-BASED OUTPATIENT CLINIC LOCATIONS

**2,202**  
Veterans Served



**Ashtabula**  
2044 Lambros Lane | Ashtabula, OH 44004  
866-463-0912 or 814-868-8661, press 2

**2,818**  
Veterans Served



**Crawford**  
16954 Conneaut Lake Road | Meadville, PA 16335  
866-962-3210 or 814-868-8661, press 2

**1,084**  
Veterans Served



**McKean - NEW LOCATION**  
14 Foster Brook Boulevard  
814-368-3019 or 814-868-





New Dental Clinic

**1,915**  
Veterans Served



**N**  
| Bradford, PA 16701  
8661, press 2



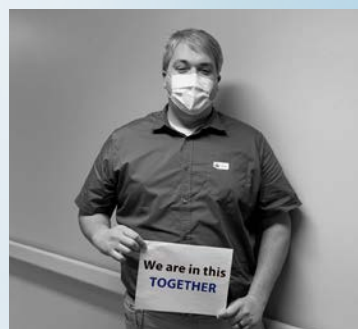
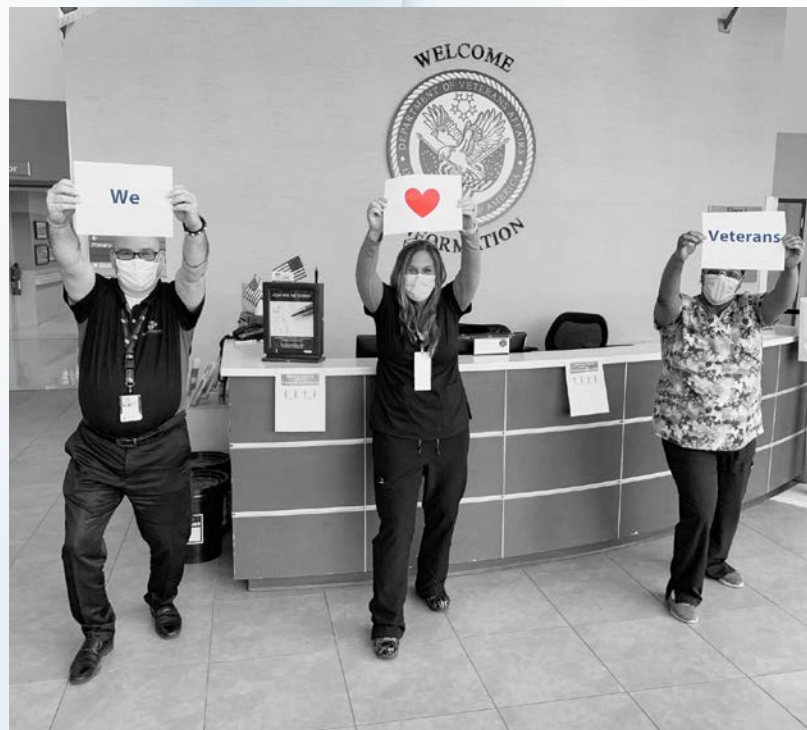
**Venango**  
464 Allegheny Boulevard | Franklin, PA 16323  
866-962-3260 or 814-868-8661, press 2

**2,222**  
Veterans Served



**Warren**  
3 Farm Colony Drive | North Warren, PA 16365  
866-682-3250 or 814-868-8661, press 2

Thanking our  
**Front+Line**  
*Heroes*







## PRINT YOUR ERIE VAMC PATIENT RESOURCE GUIDE

Erie VAMC's Patient Resource Guide is a simple, easy-to-use guide designed to help you navigate the wealth of programs/resources available to you and to connect you with our local health experts.

**Download our Erie VAMC Patient Resource Guide here:**

**[www.erie.va.gov/news/ERIE-VAMC-Patient-Resource-Guide\\_Single\\_Pages.pdf](http://www.erie.va.gov/news/ERIE-VAMC-Patient-Resource-Guide_Single_Pages.pdf)**

## PRINT YOUR VA WELCOME KIT

Whether you're just getting out of the service or you've been a civilian for years now, the VA Welcome Kit can help guide you to the benefits and services you've earned.

**Download your VA Welcome Kit here:** [www.va.gov/welcome-kit](http://www.va.gov/welcome-kit)



## IMPORTANT CONTACTS

### Main Line – Phone Tree

814-868-8661

1-800-274-8387 (toll free)

**Press 1** Pharmacy

**Press 2** Appointments &  
Specialty Care Providers

**Press 3** Nurse Line

**Press 4** Eligibility

**Press 5** Billing

**Press 7** Veterans Crisis Line

### Behavioral Health Clinic

814-860-2038

### Caregiver Support Program

814-860-2657

### Eligibility

814-860-2970

### Medical Social Work

814-860-2529

### Medication Refills

814-868-6284

1-800-274-8387 (toll-free)

### Non-VA Care Notification

Notify within 72 hours

814-860-2800 (M-F 8a-4:30p)

814-868-8661 (After hours, ask for  
Medical Administration Assistant)

### Release of Information

814-860-2212

### Transition & Care Management

(OEF/OIF/OND)

814-860-2965

### Veterans Crisis Line

[www.veteranscrisisline.net](http://www.veteranscrisisline.net)

1-800-273-8255 (press 1)

Text - 838255

### Whole Health Program

814-860-2437

### Women Veterans Program

814-860-2907

### VA Mobile Applications

[mobile.va.gov](http://mobile.va.gov)

pro·tect

keep safe from harm or injury



per·sev·ere

continue in a course of action even in the face of difficulty

VA



**U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**

Veterans Health Administration

Erie VA Medical Center